

# **Blacksburg/Christiansburg/Montgomery Area Metropolitan Planning Organization**

## **Minutes**

### **May 7, 2009 Policy Board Meeting**

**PRESENT:**

Steve Mouras	- Virginia Tech
Richard Ballengee	- Town of Christiansburg
Lance Terpenney	- Town of Christiansburg
Richard Caywood	- VDOT (Salem)
Adele Schirmer	- Town of Blacksburg
Leslie Hagar-Smith	- Town of Blacksburg
Doug Marrs	- Montgomery County
Carol Edmonds	- Montgomery County
Jeff Sizemore	- Department of Rail and Public Transportation
Elijah Sharp	- NRVPDC
Dan Brugh	- BCMC MPO
Randal Gwinn	- Recording Secretary

**ABSENT:**

Rebecca Martin	- Blacksburg Transit
Tammye Davis	- Federal Highway Administration
Tony Cho	- Federal Transit Administration
Ron Rordam	- Town of Blacksburg
Michael St. Jean	- VT Montgomery Regional Airport Authority

**NON MPO PRESENT:**

Michael Russell	- VDOT (Salem)
David Clarke	- VDOT (Christiansburg)
Erik Olsen	- Blacksburg Transit
Dianna Morris	- Blacksburg Transit

## **I. DECLARATION OF A QUORUM AND CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Terpenney declared a quorum and called the meeting to order at 2 PM.

At this time Lance introduced Elijah Sharp as the new representative for the New River Valley Planning District Commission.

## **II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

On a motion by Richard Ballengee, seconded by Adele Schirmer, and carried unanimously, the agenda was approved.

### **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 6, 2008**

On a motion by Richard Ballengee, seconded by Adele Schirmer, and carried unanimously, the Minutes were approved. Carol Edmonds abstained from voting due to not being in attendance at the November meeting.

### **IV. PUBLIC ADDRESS**

There being no speakers, the public address session was closed.

#### **I. OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business to discuss.

#### **II. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **A. Approval of 2009-10 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

Dan Brugh reviewed the recent actions on the draft 2009-10 UPWP.

His summary included approval of the draft by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on March 19, 2009 and its subsequent advertisement in the Roanoke Times and the News Messenger for 30 days, posting on the MPO website, and mailing to email lists for the MPO, Governmental Regulatory Agencies and the MPO Interested parties for comment.

He advised that four comments that were received – three requesting a study of transit service for Warm Hearth and one for connection of the SmartWay bus to Amtrak. The Amtrak connection request will be sent to the SmartWay Advisory Committee for consideration and, as a result of the Warm Hearth Transit request, Montgomery County has also requested the study of transit service to that area. He stated that funding to conduct the latter study will come from Transit Planning for the MPO. Dan also advised that VDOT funding cuts initially indicated in the draft UPWP were being restored and that these additional funds were placed in the “Special Studies” section of the UPWP.

Finally Dan reported that the TAC recommends MPO Policy Board approval of the attached 2009-10 UPWP along with the other supporting resolutions that are done annually as well. These additional resolutions are: authorizing the Chairman and/or Executive Director to execute the annual agreements with VDOT and VDRPT, execute the annual Certifications and Assurances for FTA, execute the annual FTA Pass Through resolution, execute the authorizing resolution to file with VDRPT for grants of federal funds under FTA Section 5303, and execute the Designation resolution

At this point Adele asked if the UPWP Special Studies funds could be used to advance the proposed 460 Bypass Southgate Interchange study. Dan replied that when initial discussions concerning adding another Interchange in the area occurred, Michael Gray had checked on using MPO Planning funds and found that MPO funds could not be used for this purpose. Richard Caywood then commented that we needed to verify that answer. Basically, the FHA feels that planning money is not intended to do IMRs since IMRs are considered to be the next step after planning has been completed.

Richard then said that given the current fiscal condition, he didn't know what the chance of success was, but that he was pursuing creation of a small project to develop the IMR. His recommendation to do this went in several months ago when the request was issued for their input on possible projects for the Six Year Plan. It would be advisable to have someone formally request this at the June 3<sup>rd</sup> Public Meeting for the Six Year Plan at the Northside Middle School in Roanoke.

Adele then asked Richard if her understanding of what was needed was correct, i.e. formally request that a project be added to the Six Year Plan to fund the IMR for the interchange. Richard replied yes. Steve asked if he was correct that special studies money cannot be used for this study. Richard replied that his understanding is that you can't use Federal planning dollars to fund an IMR since an IMR is more a component of design, but he would check again to be certain. Michael R. then commented that the FHA expects special studies money to be used for some of the lead in work for an IMR but not the actual IMR. Steve replied that based on an email that he received, it sounded as if we didn't have to do anything more leading up to the IMR, and we are now at the point in the process of developing the IMR. Dan asked for an estimate and Michael R. and Richard replied that based on similar IMRs recently completed, it would be about \$300,000.

At this point Lance commented that last year the Board approved / adopted the Draft UPWP and all associated resolutions with one vote rather than individually. He then asked if the Board wished to do the same today and the Board concurred.

On a motion by Doug Marrs, seconded by Leslie Hager-Smith, and carried unanimously, the 2009-10 UPWP and associated resolutions were approved and/or authorized.

#### **B. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA-Stimulus Funds)**

Dan gave a brief overview of the status of ARRA funds which basically followed the materials included in the agenda document:

VDOT and VDRPT will be receiving approximately \$695 million. VDOT will have approximately \$500 million in discretionary funds of which half must be obligated by June 30, 2009 and the remainder by March 2, 2010. Approximately \$175 million has been advertised in bridge repair and paving contracts. None of these were in the MPO area. The additional \$75 million will be distributed in the near future. VDRPT received approximately \$30 million to be used for rural and small urban areas. Approximately 56% has been distributed to date with Blacksburg Transit receiving around \$4.6 million. These funds are to be used for capital only. The remaining 44% will be distributed late summer/early fall for capital needs as well. A TIP Amendment will be needed in June for the Transit funds and any funds that may be allocated by VDOT in Phase I, therefore the next MPO Policy Board meeting date may need to be adjusted.

Dan concluded by stating that concurrence of the Policy Board for the TAC to proceed with advertisement for comment of the Amendment is needed with final approval needed from the Policy Board. The consensus of the Board was to proceed with the TAC developing the Amendment and advertising for comment.

Richard distributed copies of two letters sent by the Secretary of Transportation to the ranking members of the transportation committees and General Assembly and highlighted the content.

## **II. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Dan presented the group with his report as follows:

### **A. 2035 Long Range Plan Update**

We expect our on call consultant, Joe Springer from Parsons, to report back to us with results from the initial meeting with the localities by as early as next week. This will include changes given to him by the localities plus the updated socio-economic data. The next steps in the process will be the review of the information by the Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County Planning Departments followed by VDOT traffic modeling. Currently we are scheduled to complete this work by the summer of next year.

### **B. Franklin Street/ Cambria Street Intersection Study Update**

A draft report of recommendations is expected in the next two weeks. Once we receive the report the process will be advertisement for a public meeting for comments followed by bringing a final report of the results back to the Policy Board for acceptance.

### **C. Christiansburg Bus Survey Update**

The overview of the bus survey was presented to the Christiansburg Town Council at their April meeting. There is funding in their budget tentatively earmarked for this expansion of service and the MPO and Blacksburg Transit will be going to the Town Council work session on Monday the 18<sup>th</sup> of May at 2:00 PM to answer questions that Council may have.

### **D. SmartWay Bus Update**

We don't have the last quarterly information as it has not been sent to us in digital format for us to update our graphs. The only issue is the announcement by the City of Roanoke pertaining to fare increases for the Smart Way Bus. The Smart Way Advisory Committee reviewed fare increases in January and decided against any at that time and the fare increase announced by the City of Roanoke is currently on hold awaiting further developments. The Smart Way Advisory Committee was formed to have oversight on route, schedule and fare modifications. Valley Metro has a new staff who don't know the history of the system and how the process works.

### **E. Ride Solutions Update**

The quarterly update was presented to the Board. Richard distributed and discussed copies of a recent study done by Ride Solutions regarding Park and Ride lots.

Steve spoke on behalf of the Smart Way Advisory Committee concerning the Exit 140 Park & Ride which the report shows is currently operating in a failure state. The subject is not a new one to the Smart Way Advisory Committee and Steve asked Richard if a new, larger site would be possible. Richard responded by advising about ongoing efforts to identify what can be done to improve what is at the 140 site in the short term:

The immediate issue is how to get people out of the mud on the unpaved portion of the lot and then the desire is to double the size of the paved lot. A larger parcel is needed, however one of the reasons the 140 lot is so busy is due to its accessibility and if you move further away then accessibility becomes an issue. Another possibility could be to move onto nearby VDOT property. A larger issue isn't reflected in the study report since it does not account for how many people are not riding the Smart Way Bus due to the lot being at or near capacity or in poor condition. Richard advised that the VDOT Salem District didn't request much in the way of new projects in this fiscal year and the Exit 140 Park & Ride lot along with the 460 Bypass Southgate Interchange IMR are the two that he did request funding for. Richard B. then asked Richard to clarify the meaning of his comment that Exit 118 is at the point of failure. Richard explained that he meant a full or nearly full lot actually discourages people from stopping, they instead choose to drive on by and thus the lot has failed in its purpose to attract new users and reduce travel demand on the road. Erik then mentioned that Echo Star has made tentative offers to use part of their lot and running a shuttle to the Park & Ride. It's something to keep in mind.

**F. VDOT Six Year Plan meeting**

Dan advised that the public hearing for the VDOT Six Year Plan would be June 3, 2009, 6 PM at the Northside Middle School, 6810 Northside High School Road, Roanoke, VA.

**G. Other items**

None

**III. OTHER BUSINESS**

None

**IV. NEXT MEETING**

The next scheduled meeting is June 4, 2009. This meeting might need to be moved to accommodate VDOT receipt of ARRA funds.

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 PM